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SUBJECT: FM DOUSTE-BLAZY MEETS AMBASSADOR STAPLETON, URGES  
CREATIVE FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT

Classified By: Ambassador Craig Stapleton. Reasons 1.4b,d

11. (SBU) Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy welcomed Ambassador Stapleton to France during a October 13 courtesy call that had been repeatedly deferred by scheduling problems at the Quai d'Orsay. Joining FM Douste-Blazy were WHA A/S-Equivalent Parfait and Americas Advisor Dore; DCM Karl Hofmann and poloff also attended. Declaring himself "pro-American," conscious of a shared history and common democratic values, Douste-Blazy emphasized his hope to deepen Franco-American cooperation in international affairs. He cited recent coordination on Lebanon and Syria as a case study in teamwork, and stated that consultations on Iran were "positive."

12. (C) The U.S. should pay more attention, however, to development aid, he offered. "The Republican administration and President Bush" should be more receptive to initiatives for creative financing on a "planetary" scale as proposed by President Chirac in tandem with President Lula. Douste-Blazy referred specifically to the notion of a tax on international airline tickets. Acknowledging the Ambassador's rejoinder that President Bush had doubled U.S. assistance to Africa and on HIV/AIDS, Douste-Blazy emphasized the importance of channeling aid through international mechanisms rather than bilateral programs. Development aid, moreover, was critical to the fight against terrorism, he maintained, finding it significant that three of the perpetrators of the London bombings hailed from the African Sahel region. "If Africans, who are often Muslims, are left to die of hunger, thirst and AIDS, sooner or later they will follow calls to commit kamikaze attacks in New York, Paris and London." FM Douste-Blazy said he looked forward to pursuing discussions with World Bank President Wolfowitz during 13-14 October meetings, expressing hope that Wolfowitz would be able to rally the U.S. administration.

13. (SBU) FM Douste-Blazy and the Ambassador each praised the excellent commercial relationship between France and the U.S. Douste-Blazy mentioned there were over 2,400 French subsidiaries in the U.S. accounting for a billion dollars in business each day. The Ambassador added that there were about 500,000 more employees on each side of the Atlantic thanks to American and French companies. Douste-Blazy encouraged the Ambassador to meet with Clara Gaymard, "a young woman, strong and tough," whom Chirac had chosen to promote foreign investment in France as President of the "Invest in France" agency (AFII). Douste-Blazy asked for the Ambassador's help in countering a prevalent American stereotype of France with its 35 hour work week and street protests by communists and unions. France, he insisted, enjoyed the highest worker productivity worldwide, a fact he attributed to a culture of arts, leisure, food and family (sic). That said, he granted that a 38-39 hour workweek would be acceptable. Unions, he remarked, were a spent force in France. The Ambassador observed that U.S. companies were mostly happy with the quality of their French employees, even considering the constraints of the French social protection system. The way to attract further U.S. investment, he suggested, was first to encourage expansion by U.S. firms already operating in France.

4 (SBU) Turning to the risk of an avian flu pandemic, the Ambassador appealed for close Franco-American cooperation and urged French participation in IPAPI. Douste-Blazy noted that, as health minister, he had personally put together the French response plan on avian flu. He noted that Aventis, a French company, was the main supplier of the Avian flu vaccine, which it was producing at a factory in the U.S. and another in France. Douste-Blazy pledged to raise the matter with the Secretary.

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STAPLETON